

## **BEING AN ALLY**

- Allies should be open to meeting people where they are for who they are in a non-judgmental way.
- All people, including all clients and all colleagues, are human beings who deserve respect.
- Allies see their clients holistically and recognize that each part of their identity is valuable and important.
- Allies need to support clients through whatever they are going through without personal belief or judgement getting in the way.
- Recognizing your own biases and limitations is an important first step, and it is in both your own and your clients' best interests to draw your boundaries in a healthy place. However, it is NEVER okay to refuse service to a client when your agency does offer these services.
  - If there is someone who is in a better position to serve your client, it is okay to refer them to that person. For example, counsellors and clients are usually matched based on compatibility.
  - However, if (for example) you are a settlement agency and your LGBTQ+ client has settlement needs, you must provide those services. It is good to tell them about the nearest LGBTQ+ agency in case they would like to access those services too. But such a referral is not a suitable replacement for providing services yourself, especially because most LGBTQ+ agencies do not offer settlement services.
- Allies know that they need to learn more about their clients' identities so that they can support them better.
- Allies recognize that their client's experiences are important to learning about them and seek to learn through those experiences to better anticipate their needs.
- Allies work toward organizational and systemic change.

- Be aware that there are some politics around the concept of allyship. Some people have asked “Is it ‘Ally’ or ‘A Lie?’” This refers to how sometimes people in positions of privilege have claimed the title of ally in order to self-promote or to deny their own role in oppression without necessarily being seen as an ally by the community they claim to support. “Ally” is an earned title. Ally work is important. But think about the REASONS why you are doing the work that you’re doing. Ask yourself whether that work is actually seen as helpful, supportive, and wanted by the community you seek to support.
- **Examples of STRATEGIES for being an ally:**
  - “Don’t speak for me; invite me to the table.”
  - The 4 S’s: Know when to step up, when to step back, when to speak up, and when to shut up. In other words, don’t be a complicit bystander as oppression takes place. Be aware of how much space you’re taking up and make room to prioritize the voices of those with lived experience of this oppression.
  - Ask yourself, “Who isn’t here? Why aren’t they here? Are there barriers that prevent them from being here? Is this a safe space for them? Is this space worth it for them to be here? What are we doing to make it so they can be here?”
  - Use your privilege (such as access to resources, wealth, power, influence, safety, etc.) to make positive change and to create space for marginalized groups.
  - Give up inappropriate privileges (such as not being required to learn about anyone else’s culture and expecting everyone else to conform to yours).
  - What other strategies can you think of?